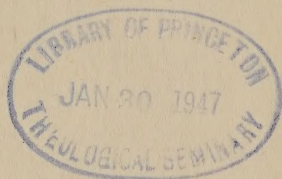


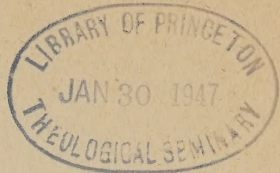
THE MYSTIC
SOUL OF SPAIN

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The mystic soul of Spain

THE MYSTIC SOUL OF SPAIN



THE MYSTIC SOUL OF SPAIN

By

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Table of Contents

	INTRODUCTION	1
1	THE SOUL OF SPAIN	7
2	MYSTICISM AND STOICISM IN SPAIN...	11
3	SPAIN AND SENECA	17
4	CHRISTIANITY AND PAGAN PHILOSOPHY	27
5	BULWARK OF THE FAITH	34
6	THE MYSTIC FLAME	41
7	RELIGION THE UNIFYING ELEMENT...	48
8	SPAIN IN AMERICA	56
9	THE RENAISSANCE IN SPAIN	64
10	OPPOSITION TO SECULARISM	78
11	THE LEITMOTIF OF SPANISH LITERATURE	85
12	THIRST FOR IMMORTALITY	90

Introduction

On the wall of the seminary of Vergara, in the Basque provinces, there is an inscription: "Oh! the importance of the life to come. Oh! the nothingness of this one." In such an expression, perhaps, is the simplest explanation of what so many writers have called *the Spanish enigma*.

In much of the world this concern for eternal life—where it exists at all—is individual, not national. In Spain, on the other hand, well-being, comfort, good living, appear often to stand in the way of salvation. Austerity, frugality and bodily mortification are considered

substantial means of attaining a true Christian way of life. "*No se va al cielo en coche,*" says an old Spanish proverb. For the truly Catholic Spaniard the way to heaven is the heroic life: penance, suffering, abnegation—even death. The greatest ambition of the Spaniard is to achieve immortality; he is forever pressing upon eternity.

Spain's wars have been wars for religion, for the faith, for God. The Armada was sent against the Protestants of England; at Lepanto Catholicism was triumphant over the menace of the Crescent; in the New World the missionary arrived with the conqueror to announce peace and to make the Indian a son of God and an heir to heaven. Text books too often emphasize only the lust for gold and the enslavement of the natives. Rarely is the testament of Queen Isabella mentioned, which specifically states that her greatest desire was to bring the souls of her new Indian subjects to Christ.

The loss of a soul is the greatest of tragedies to the Spaniard, as it must be to any Christian. This is why, since the Spaniard has believed

this so firmly, there has been an absence of heresies in the peninsula, why the interference of commerce has been fought against, why its basic mysticism has burned brightly and not with futile flickerings.

This is why the Renaissance took such a different course in Spain, tempered by true charity, aware that the world is theocentric and not centered about the vanities of individual men. This is why Spain fought the early rebellion against authority led by Luther and Calvin, the subsequent secularism which swept over the rest of Europe, the later enlightenment fostered by the Encyclopedists.

It is as simple as this: rectitude is either recognized, or civilization collapses; the Divine is either accepted in full, or not at all; one tradition is acknowledged and respected, or there is a choking prevalence of conflicting confusions, each seeking original expression. As Menendez y Pelayo says in his *Homage to Balmes*: "Where the heritage of the past, poor or rich, large or small, is not preserved, let us not expect an original thought or a dominant idea to spring forth. A new people can impro-

vise everything, save intellectual culture. An old people cannot renounce it, without extinguishing the most noble part of its life."

Because Spain absorbed Christianity with firmness and assurance and knew its true meaning, unadulterated by the philosophical interpretations of the early Mediterranean world, or later materialism or skepticism, her Christianity is unique. Her devotion to its ideals permeates the national spirit, the life and literature of her people. To farmer and philosopher, peasant and poet, eternity remains ever in view. Since the only goal of life is so ever-present, it has been easy for the Spaniard to devote himself to the service of God, and equally easy for him to enjoy the fruits of deep contemplation.

By the world's standards this may not be considered happiness. But this contemplative spirit, together with this great, unquestioning faith, is the essence of Spanish mysticism. And it is mysticism, not stoicism, which is the essence of the Spanish soul. If the existence of the soul is acknowledged, and mysticism clearly understood, Spain ceases to be an enigma.

THE MYSTIC SOUL OF SPAIN

1

The Soul of Spain

AT THE CLOSE OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY Nicholas Masson de Morvilliers raised a furore in Europe by asking these two questions in the *Encyclopedie Methodique*: "Mais que doit-on a l'Espagne? Et depuis deux siècles, depuis quatre, depuis six, qu'a-t-elle fait pour l'Europe?" To a century of positivist philosophy and of rising industrialism this was a very

logical question. The metaphysics of Suarez, the international law of Vittoria, the great theological contribution of Cano and Soto to the Council of Trent, could have no value whatsoever to such a mind; nor could the fact that Spain had produced a most human and original theatre in the productions of Lope de Vega, Calderon, Tirso de Molina and Alarcon, the greatest novel in the modern sense of the word, *Don Quijote*, a most profound satirist in Quevedo, an outstanding moralist in Lorenzo Gracian, and a school of mystics—in St. Teresa of Avilá, St. John of the Cross, Fray Luis de Leon and Juan de los Angeles—which has never been equalled. Even if M. Masson de Morvilliers could not have realized the importance of such contributions, it is difficult to comprehend how he could have ignored the transcendental fact that Spain had broken the columns of Hercules and had spread Mediterranean culture through the countries lying on the other side of the Atlantic and on the remotest shores of the Pacific.

But this inability to understand Spain, to appreciate the great contributions she has made

to the life of the spirit, is not limited to one writer and one book. Spain has been, and continues to be, a perpetual puzzle to those who pause to consider her.

Some analyzers attempt to explain the enigma of Spain by the strong Moorish and Oriental elements which combine so strongly with European traits in the Spanish soul. Others base their interpretations on the physiognomy of the land. In no like area of Europe, perhaps not in all the world, do there exist such extremes of dryness and moisture, heat and cold, fertility and barrenness, such smiling landscape and such dreary desolation. These contrasts, which are found between the arid stretches of Aragon and the *huerta* groves of Elche, between the wind-blown wastes of the Mancha and the *vega* of Granada, are, it is to be admitted, not without counterpart in the character of the inhabitants.

But the most characteristic quality of any country, as of any human being, is the *soul* (though many do not believe in the soul today—and herein lies the first reason why Spain is described as an enigma). Spain has a soul:

it is *mystic*, fundamentally mystic. Some Spaniards, like Ganivet, have emphasized stoicism as the outstanding trait of the Spanish character. Stoicism in its practical and broadest sense is, perhaps, to be found in the Spanish soul, but stoicism in its philosophical and restricted meaning is not. For the Spaniard, then, what is mysticism?

2

Mysticism and Stoicism in Spain

AS THEOLOGIANS HAVE WISELY OBSERVED, TO merit the name of "mystic" it is not enough to be a devout Christian, a great theologian or a saint. In a strict sense, the word "mystic" refers to that supernatural relation between the soul and God in which the soul receives from God, directly and secretly, experimental knowledge of His infinite grandeur, love, perfection

and beauty. In order to attain this special gift of God, the soul must, ordinarily, go in search of its Maker by purifying itself through prayer, contemplation, penance, mortification and the imitation of Christ's virtues. Along this difficult path, of course, it is aided by divine grace. Once it is purified and free from the attraction of all worldly pleasures, God takes hold of it by flooding it with the light of love which enables the soul to experience His infinite perfection.

In a wider sense, the word "mystic" may be applied to a people possessed of a deep religious sense, manifested in every expression of its life, literature and art. This is seen in the longing for eternity as a immediate reality, in small regard for worldly success and the purely mundane, and in an ardent desire to suffer and fight for the triumph of the ideals of Christ and His Church.

Mysticism is a state of the soul. So powerful and fruitful is its virtue that from it are born: a mystic theology; a mystic ontology, in which the spirit, enlightened by the flame of love, glimpses the perfections and attributes of the

Supreme Being (pure reasoning can not reach this elevation); a mystic psychology, which discovers and eradicates even the slightest traces of self-love and human affections; and a mystic poetry, which is no more than the interpretation, in the form of art, of all these theologies and philosophies animated by the personal and intense feeling of the poet who sings of his love.

Only in Christianity can pure and perfect mysticism live, but it is possible to meet it in a less pure state in every belief that affirms and recognizes the distinction between the human personality and the divine personality. It cannot be the fruit of vague deism, nor of fragmentary and anthropomorphic polytheism. For this reason the Greeks never attained a semblance nor a glimmer of it. Where men are valued more than gods, who is going to aspire to ecstatic union, or to efface himself in the sweetness of contemplation? The superiority of Hellenic art consisted in seeing the *form* everywhere, that is, the *finite*. The superiority of mysticism consists in giving us a divine consciousness of the *infinite*, even when it appears

enveloped in terrestrial forms and allegories.

In the field of Christianity with which we are concerned now, mysticism has its foundation in the firm belief that God, and only God, can fulfill the *infinite* longings of the human heart. It is this deep religious belief that characterized and dominated the spirit of Spain completely the moment she adopted Christianity.

It is the belief of Ganivet, one of the most subtle analyzers of the Spanish soul, that the most profound moral and, to a certain extent, religious element that is found in its physical makeup is *stoicism*; not the brutish and heroic stoicism of Cato, nor the serene and majestic stoicism of Marcus Aurelius, nor the rigid and extreme stoicism of Epictetus, but rather the natural and human stoicism of Seneca. Seneca is not a Spaniard, nor a son of Spain, by chance, insists Ganivet, he is Spanish *per essentiam*.

He condenses the whole doctrine of Seneca in this manner. Do not let yourself be conquered by anything outside of your spirit. Think in the midst of life's accidents that you have within you a mother-force, something

strong and indestructible, like an adamantine axis around which revolve the petty acts that form the drama of your daily life. Whatever may be the circumstances that overtake you, prosperous or adverse, or those which appear to debase you with their very contact, conduct yourself at all times so firm and erect that at least it may always be said of you that you are *a man*.

"This," says Ganivet, "is Spanish, and it is so Spanish that Seneca did not have to invent it because he found it already invented; he merely had to take up and give it perpetual form, working as true men of genius work. The Spanish spirit, unformed, unpolished, bare, does not cover its primitive nakedness with artificial garments; it covers itself with the mantle of Senecism; and this rudimentary covering remain always, and can be seen whenever one penetrates ever so slightly the surface or outward appearance of our nation.

"Vast, or rather immeasurable, is the influence of Senecism on the religious and moral conformation, on the common law of Spain; on art and profane science; on the proverbs,

maxims and refrains; and even on those branches of cultivated science to which Seneca never paid any attention. And because our philosopher had the genial and never-sufficiently-praised idea of saying goodbye to this life by the gentle and tranquil method of blood-letting, he has influenced our medical science as much as Hippocrates or Galen. Spain alone exceeds all other nations together in the number and superiority of her blood-letters. The famous German doctor is Doctor Faust; the famous Spanish doctor is Doctor Sangredo (Blood-Letter). And never in the history of humanity was so beautiful an example of persevering stoicism given as the one which offers us the interminable series of blood-letters, who, for centuries and centuries have charged themselves with alleviating the circulatory apparatus of the Spaniards, sending many to the grave, it is true, but purging the rest from their sanguine excesses to the end that they could continue to live in relative peace and calm."

No one who has thoroughly read and understood the complete work of Seneca can hold such an opinion.

3

Spain and Seneca

WAS SENECA, THEN, A GENUINELY SPANISH product? Did he belong to the two races that most profoundly have determined Spanish character—the Celtic and the Iberian?

History tells us that the Turdetanos inhabited Betica in the time of the Empire, and that their capital, Cordoba, the birthplace of Seneca, shone with brilliant geniuses. But

W.P. 1
history does not show us, either scientifically or sociologically, that these inhabitants of the south can be identified with either the Iberians or the Celts. The supposition that the Turdetanos have left some traces in the Andalusian character is scarcely tenable, since in Andalusia the Vandals, and later the Arabs, swept away what remained of Roman influence. Seneca was a thoroughly Roman product. In the age in which he lived the epicureanism of the early Empire had been replaced by the philosophy of the Porticus. Roman independence and liberty had disappeared. Caesar, incarnating Destiny, was sitting on the throne of the world like an earthly representative of omnipotent Fate, of the great cosmic unity. True wisdom consisted in conquering and overcoming adversity and the annoyances of life, with silent imperturbability. The only compensation for the man who lost his political power, or was thrown into exile, consisted in seeking retirement and in accepting it with resignation and an inner serenity which no one could give him, nor any power take away. However, it is not at all a fact that Seneca practiced, or even

preached constantly, this doctrine of the dignity of man, or that he himself was a model of rectitude or of greatness of mind. A close examination of his doctrines reveals a series of contradictions which utterly disprove the assertions of Ganivet, and at the same time shows that Seneca hardly embodies in any way the Spanish spirit which, once it has embraced an idea, unhesitatingly and persistently carries it through to its final consequences.

Influenced by the education of his day, Seneca in everything he undertook aspired to a kind of unattainable eclecticism which combined all schools and systems: "Always read the approved authors," he said to Lucilius, "and if, after having amused yourself with others, it pleases you to return to the first, when you have glanced through the many, select for that day only one in order that you may digest it. I, myself, do this also; from among many I take one. I am also accustomed at times to go to foreign fields, not as a fugitive, but as an explorer" (*Ad Lucilium*, Ep. 2a). But this exploration frequently carried Seneca far from the limit fixed by him, and although, when

speaking to Lucilius, he showed himself such a devotee of Epicurus, later on he found himself very near to the school of Zeno, whose doctrines he followed for a long time. He never really ceased to admire the speculation of Socrates' pupil.

Finally, tired of all systems because none succeeded in satisfying him (for it was impossible that the truth that he sought should emerge from all of them), he decided to seek the truth by depending entirely upon his own powers. He then explains to Lucilius: "He who follows another follows nothing, or rather seeks nothing. When then . . . Shall I not follow the footsteps of the best? I will follow the ancient path; but if I find another cleaner and smoother, I shall follow it. Those who knew them before us are not our masters, but our guides. The truth is patent to all, but as yet it has not been possessed by any. Much remains for future generations" (*Ad Lucilium*, Ep. 33).

Such, then, are the principles upon which Seneca intends to reconstruct his studies. Nevertheless, the very liberty that he professes is not

sufficient to free him from the contradictions which are discovered in all his books. If he counsels as a politician, we shall see him deny tomorrow what he affirms today, even in questions of utmost importance to the State. If he reasons on morals, he approves today what he disparages tomorrow. In his treatise, *De Clementia*, he succeeds in persuading Nero, with the example of Augustus, to pardon not only the injuries that were done to him as a man, but also those that were directed against him as a sovereign (*De Clementia*, Lib. I, ch. 9). But, fearing perhaps that excessive clemency would cause contempt by permitting the crimes of the common people to remain unpunished, and thus apply a motive for a rebellion, he says farther on: "But the lower class must not be pardoned because, where discord arises between the good and the bad, confusion and a flood of vices follow. It becomes necessary, then, to employ that moderation which knows how to distinguish those that can be corrected and those that are already incurable. It is not fitting to use a common form of clemency for everybody because it is

just as cruel to pardon all as it is to pardon none" (*Ibid.*, Lib. I, ch. 2). Then, swinging finally to the opposite extreme, he advises that one destroy his enemies: "Are not kings wont to kill also? Yes, certainly; but, whenever they do, public utility advises it." (*Ibid.*, Lib. I, ch. 12). Here we have the man of State contradicting himself. And Nero, setting aside as useless the early counsels of the moralist, showed by his conduct that he was not in the habit of forgetting the precepts of the politician.

In many other questions of equal consequence Seneca contradicted himself. Questioning the civic virtues of the Romans, which, on other occasions, he had so highly praised, he asserted that, to obtain the honors and distinctions of the State, it was enough simply to have been born of an illustrious father. "Who made Cicero's son consul except his father? . . . and recently, what brought Cinna to the Consulate from the ranks of the enemy? . . . What brought Sextus Pompey and the other Pompeys except the greatness of one single member of the family?" (*Ibid.*, Lib. IV, ch. 22).

Equal inconsistency is revealed in his discussion of the subject of benefits. He had maintained in various passages that indiscriminate kindness was appreciated by nobody: "Beneficium quod quibuslibet datur, nulli gratum est." He made it plain that deliberate thought and a certain selection ought to precede the bestowal of any favor. But later he repented of this maxim, for he said on sketching the model of a truly ideal man that he should be one "qui non voluntatem tantum juvandi habuit, sed cupiditatem." In still another place he added: "Etiam si quid morae intervenit, evitemus omnimodo, ne deliberasse videamur" (*Ibid.*, Lib. 55, ch. 1). Here again it is clearly evident that Seneca was refuting in an absolutely convincing manner a doctrine previously upheld.

When Seneca writes of friendship or hate, of love or ingratitude, or resignation, constancy, tranquility of mind, meekness, grandeur, vanity, pride or avarice, we see him always confronted with implacable doubts and irresolutions. How can it be said that a spirit so vacillating, so contradictory, and in so many

instances so faint hearted and indecisive, was a product and is a true representative of the Spanish type? What is there in common between Seneca and the eclectic, the sybarite, the plaything of all currents and ideas, and the Iberian race, full of energy and powerful vitality, of an unquenchable instinct of personality, with an insatiable need of believing firmly in and consecrating itself to its ideals, heroic, fervent, obdurate, with something of a gloomy contemplation, and hiding underneath burning passions and the impetuosity of a blood heated by an African sun?

Ever since Ganivet asserted that Seneca embodies the true Spanish spirit, this interpretation has been repeated to the point of satiety. His idea may have originated from reading Seneca in one of the manuals of *Moral Philosophy and Politics* which were compiled from selections of his most popular works, rather than from the complete original. He who wishes to consider the question further may read with profit Alonzo Nunez de Castro's *Seneca impugnado de Seneca, en cuestiones politicas y morales* (1651).

In respect to the other strange assertion that, because Seneca met death by opening his veins, he influenced the multitude of blood-letters which existed in Spain in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—those so humorously described in the picaresque novel—we can only say if one takes it as a bit of humor we will acknowledge that it is ingenious. But it can in no way be taken seriously. If that example had really influenced the Spanish people, we should have had in our real life a multitude of suicides. But in Spain where are the suicides? Menendez y Pelayo, in his study of Martinez de Toledo, asks if there is anything more improbable than the suicide of a Spaniard during the Golden Centuries of Spain's history. Of the great number of victims who were punished by the Inquisition or by royal authority, how many tried to escape the gallows with poison or blade? Only someone condemned as a heretic, like Doctor Constantino, and he horrified even his co-religionists.

Even in the literary classics of those times suicides were almost as rare as in real life, in

spite of the fact that poets have often used this easy device to unravel bad plots. Except for the death of Melibea in the tragi-comedy, *La Celestina*, the other suicides that I recall are attributed to historic persons of antiquity, to barbarian, pagan heroes or sentimental enamored shepherds of the pastoral novel who lived an unreal existence. Stoicism, then, is not of the essence of Spain.

4

Christianity and Pagan Philosophy

THE MOMENT CHRISTIANITY WAS INTRODUCED into Spain it rooted itself so firmly there that it was soon the essential element of the national character. From it sprang all the great manifestations of the spirit of the race.

This phenomenon has been diversely interpreted. Some see in it a kind of natural consequence and logical evolution of the stoicism

embodied by Seneca. This opinion they base on the belief that Christianity was an evolution of the Jewish doctrine for which stoicism had carefully prepared the way. Was Christianity an evolution of any existing philosophy? In the world of Rome all philosophical solutions were exhausted: the empirical and the constructive, the materialistic and the idealistic, the eclectic and the synthetic, as well as the negative and the skeptical. Then arose stoic morality, based solely on virtue or the dignity of man, which, according to some, prepared the way for Christianity, because man, losing faith in the power of his reason, which led him to nothing positive, closed his eyes and was ready to accept any belief. But Christianity, or rather the doctrine of Jesus, opened men's eyes wide by such divine teachings as the Sermon on the Mount. Of course Christianity has a natural basis, and Revelation, that light from on high, did not destroy but rather purified human nature. But that does not mean that it was inspired in, or that it evolved from, the theories of the different philosophical schools. Whether the pagan world was more

or less prepared to receive the divine message of Jesus is not a topic to be discussed now. Probably it was, although the degeneration into which it had fallen was not very propitious for germinating an elevated doctrine of any kind. Even Renan, with all his artfulness and astonishing erudition, was unable to prove that Jesus received His teachings from any philosophical school.

If Christian morality had simply been a natural evolution of the human spirit, it would have had the value of another new school of philosophy. And with the passing of time it, too, would have gone out of fashion, as did the solutions propounded by the most sublime minds of humanity, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. But, the morality of Christ is of yesterday and today and of all times. Not only has it regenerated the pagan world, but it has also created the little that we have of modern civilization. If we have not progressed further, it is because there are not very many souls in the world who practice it.

Christianity was not the completion of the theological evolution of the Hebrew people.

To that law which had served for many centuries to maintain in the world the light of Revelation it brought something new—the regeneration of men by a new conception of love which Christ taught to the world. Some historians assert that the invasion of the barbarians helped in large measure the propagation of Christianity, and declare that the Roman people were old and decrepit and incapable of understanding this new religion. The truth is to the contrary. The Christian religion was not destined merely to draw the savage from his savagery, nor the barbarians from their barbarism. It did much more. It served also to regenerate cultured men. Romans, those in Italy as well as those of the provinces, chose to be influenced by the doctrines of the Nazarene.

The spreading of the Christian religion was accompanied by a remarkable phenomenon: the grafting of pagan philosophy onto Christianity in an effort to conciliate rational speculation with revealed truth. In this important undertaking almost all the Fathers of the Church took part. This development was quite

natural, since most of them, especially those of the first centuries, were products of Greco-Roman culture.

In those countries permeated with the idea of Christianity, rational effort accompanies the propagation of the gospel to explain and complete it. That effort was not as creative in the beginning as it should have been. It was a work of rhapsodists. Instead of working out an empirical and rational philosophy in conformity with the purity of the new faith, these Christian philosophers, heirs of the Gentile knowledge, found it more convincing and practical to make Christianity agree with the masterly teachings of the Hellenic school, that is to say, with all the Platonic and Aristotelian speculation that was not openly opposed to the principles of faith.

In the *Milleloquium Veritatis* are gathered together the ideas on *philosophia* that St. Augustine held. In Greek, *philosophia* meant love of wisdom, he says; since, on the divine authority of Sacred Scripture we know that God is wisdom by Whom all things were made, the true philosopher would be the lover of God.

And, he adds, if anyone were to ask the Epicurean what is the idea of happiness in his philosophy, he would answer that happiness consisted in the pleasures of the body. The Stoic, on the other hand, would reply that to him happiness was the fortification of the soul against the vicissitudes of life. The reply of the Christian would be that happiness was a gift of God, found only in God Who made us for himself. The heart of the Christian is restless until it rests in God; outside of Him he will never find peace.

In regard to this question it is well to remember the tremendous discussion that began in 1700 with the publication of Souverain's *Le platonisme dévoilé o Essai touchant le verbe platonicien*. According to this work, the Fathers of the Church, finding themselves continually in the presence of philosophical theories different from Christianity, felt the necessity either of harmonizing them or of combating them. However, both parties finally decided to solve the problem in the simplest way: by explaining them allegorically. Thus did the Platonic ideas penetrate Christianity. Baltus,

in his *Defense des SS. Peres accuses de Platonisme*, defended the Fathers of the Church by proving that this influence was Neo-Platonic and not Platonic. In any case we see a great deal of wasted labor and scholarship, for, after all, the philosophy of Christianity is based primarily on Revelation. As Harnack says in his *Lehrbuch der Dogmen Geschichtes*: "Christianity is a philosophy since it has a rational content and deals with the same questions that Philosophy seeks to solve; but it is not philosophy once it comes from Revelation, that is to say, once it has a supernatural origin."

5

Bulwark of the Faith

THE SPANISH CHARACTER, WHICH DRAWS THE ultimate consequences from any principles that it embraces, did not try to make conciliations of any kind when it received the evangelical doctrine, but rather adopted it in all its integrity and purity and gave itself over to it without distinctions or reserve. It can be stated as a fundamental truth in discussing Spanish culture

that neither creative philosophy, in the true sense of that word, nor significant heresies exist. Menendez y Pelayo, in spite of the most objective study in his *History of Spanish Heterodoxy*, was unable to find any heretic of any proportion.

Is this not a logical consequence, since the Christian idea as mixed with Greco-Latin philosophy had not been introduced into Spain? This does not mean that the Spanish spirit lacks capacity for philosophical speculation. The great Spanish theologians like Suarez, Vittoria, Lugo and Molina showed tremendous capacity for philosophy, but they considered speculation on theological problems much more transcendental and important. Philosophy, whose foundation is reason, had been for centuries incapable of solving the problems of life and death. Now that Christianity had amply solved these problems, of what avail was further speculation of reason which had failed?

This logic, which may seem extreme to some, has colossal force. If we examine closely the so-called Christian philosophy, the first thing that is not in accord with the significance and

content is its name. That philosophy, strictly speaking, should be called *Christianized*. Christianity has not created any philosophy, nor has it reason to. The Gospels contain the most sublime philosophy, and they are not the work of any Christian philosopher, but the Son of God. The great Christian philosopher is St. Thomas who has done nothing else, say what one may, except *Christianize* Aristotle, correcting the errors found in the Stagirite's works, not only by rational speculation but also by the light of faith and the teachings of the Scriptures.

St. John of the Cross presents us with an eloquent example of Spanish philosophy in his explanation of the first stanza of his *Spiritual Canticle*:

"The soul, considering the obligations of its state, seeing that 'the days of man are short,' that the way of eternal life is straight; that 'the just man shall scarcely be saved,' that the things of this world are empty and deceitful, that all die and perish like water poured on the ground, that time is uncertain, the last account strict, perdition most easy, and salvation most diffi-

cult: and recognizing also, on the other hand, the great debt that is owing to God, Who has created it solely for Himself, for which the service of its whole life is due, Who has redeemed it for Himself alone, for which it owes Him all else, and the correspondence of its will to His love; and remembering other innumerable blessings for which it acknowledges itself indebted to God even before it was born; and also that a great part of its life has been wasted, and that it will have to render an account of it all from the beginning unto the end, to the payment of 'the last farthing,' when God shall 'search Jerusalem with lamps'; that it is already late, and perhaps the end of the day: in order to remedy so great an evil, especially when it is conscious that God is grievously offended, and that He has hidden His face from it, because it would forget Him for the creature. The soul, now touched with sorrow and inward sinking of the heart at the sight of its imminent risks and ruin, renouncing everything and casting them aside without delaying for a day, or even an hour, with fears and groanings uttered from the heart, and wounded with the love of God, be-

gins to invoke the Beloved and says:

*Where hast Thou hidden Thyself,
And left me to my sorrow, O my beloved!"*

Into Spain, then, Christianity came unpolluted by any pagan philosophy; notwithstanding the assertion of those who say that Senecism had prepared the way. Seneca's real influence in Spain dates from a later period, long after the Catholic idea had deeply rooted itself in the Spanish mind.

The essential idea of Christianity is that the Kingdom of Christ and, therefore, of the Christian is not of this world. If His Kingdom is not on earth it must be in Heaven, that is to say, with God in all His glory and majesty. Of what value is life itself and all the contentions of the soul, even the conquest of the whole universe, if the Kingdom of God is lost? But this Kingdom of Christ also exists in this world, although it is simply a kind of initial Kingdom, a prologue of the eternal one—the Church. With the triumph of the Catholic religion man may conquer and possess the Kingdom of God.

For the realization of this triumph all the great political, literary and philosophical manifestations of the Spanish spirit strive with an extraordinary vigor and strength.

It is not strange, then, that Spain, from the moment she embraced Catholicism, has adhered to its every precept with all the tenacity inborn in the race. When the enemy of her religion invaded her land, she shed her blood not so much to reconquer her native land as to protect her Catholic soil from being tread by infidels. By defending her faith she defended herself; by defending herself she defended her faith. We can not separate this predominating religious idea of the Spaniard and this feeling of nationality. Her every effort was directed toward the expansion of a religious ideal which penetrated deeply into the hearts of a people who dedicated perpetual allegiance to it. Thus is religion so important in the life and soul of the people that it becomes the most characteristic trait that distinguishes them. It is the foundation or instrument of their nationality, and it is almost the only source, certainly the most productive, of all their intellectual activity. This

spirit is present in their every action, however small, however great. Indeed, St. Teresa remarked, "God walks even among the pots and pans."

6

The Mystic Flame

IS IT STRANGE, THEN, THAT IN THE SOUL OF such a race there should exist such a powerful tendency toward mysticism? In no other Christian nation has it penetrated so deeply into the heart or so profoundly shaped literature. Mysticism does not appear in Spain in the form of a poem, as in Italy; nor in the form of theology, as in France; nor does it show itself in revolu-

tionary experiments, pantheistic and biblical dreams, as in England, Germany or Switzerland. The action of Spanish mysticism is infinitely more extensive; it has penetrated every corner of life and left nothing untouched. It has influenced not only the intelligence but also the customs of the people. We find mysticism in the lecture hall and the cloister, in literature, the arts, and in philosophy. El Greco's figures are consumed by a mystic flame. This is the true philosophy of Spain, the most profound element of her religion and of her genius.

In those nations in which the philosophical spirit has manifested itself most powerfully, as in Greece, France, Italy and Germany, mysticism, although it had some manifestations worthy of note, had no special character or impact. It did not in any way mold the character of those nations, nor was it a characteristic note of their religion or their thought. But, as Ticknor says, "No sooner Christian, than Spain is mystic. Mysticism appears in her not in a few isolated individuals, but in the entire nation, even to the extent of having it said that it is a 'fruit of the soil'."

The reason for the strengthening of this mystic vein is more evident if one adds to this original predisposition of the Spaniard toward mysticism the political and religious vicissitudes which have swept over Spain since the invasion of the Goths; and since that other invasion of a more determinative and decisive character, the Arabic invasion. Mysticism bloomed in full flower in the sixteenth century, but it has never been absent from the Spanish soul from the moment Christianity was first preached there. It neither begins nor ends with St. Teresa, although it reached the height of its expression in her and in St. John of the Cross. The past had matured these fruits which in their full fragrance were transmitted to future generations. Thus is formed the most perfect portrait of this dominant religious idea, which was not only a consequence of native tendencies but also the result of the refusal on the part of the Spaniard to try to harmonize Christian doctrine with Greco-Roman philosophy.

At the time of the conversion of the Visigoths under Recaredo, a conversion which clearly shows the predominance of the Hispano-Roman

spirit over the Gothic, the clergy was solemnly recognized as a great power even in State affairs because of its greater culture and civilization. So quickly did its prestige increase that soon it became the true ruling force of the State. From its great spiritual force came the prerogative of disposing of the King's crown in that elective monarchy. Thus the King reigned and governed only by virtue of the protection accorded him by the Church. Here we have the first proof of the influence of spiritual values even in civil government which has persisted in Spanish history to the present time.

In his work on the Spanish mystics Rousselot says that the Councils of Toledo are an eternal monument to the wise influence which the clergy exercised over the Gothic people and that the Visigothic monarchy became the most cultured and Christian of Europe for almost two centuries. When this institution disappeared with the invasion of the Arabians, the clergy, representatives of the Christian idea, continued to exercise an influence still more decisive. Into the hearts of the conquered Goths they inculcated the redeeming idea of nationality, the firmest

foundation of which was religion. This became the supreme interest that determined and fixed the most essential trait of the Spanish people throughout the centuries. It united the whole peninsula against the common enemy of her faith.

This struggle of eight centuries has been traced by eminent historians. It does not enter into our purpose to follow it in all its details and vicissitudes. Suffice it to say that when a people in whom faith has imbedded deep roots fall under the dominion of a master who is at the same time a foreigner and an infidel, this religious strength will keep alive the national spirit. Thus the Christian resistance of Spain to the Moors meant not only reconquering the soil of their native land, but also maintaining their faith and fighting for their beliefs. Never was the struggle more national and at the same time more likely to promote a closer adherence to Catholicism. Although with the passing of time the bitterness of the hostility between Arabians and Christians was somewhat modified, this was in reality only a truce. Spanish martyrology gives abundant proof of how short-lived

and limited it was. The normal state of affairs was resistance and conflict in all forms. Throughout the whole of Spain there awoke a desire for martyrdom, for sacrificing everything precious in life, even life itself, not merely to defend the native land, but principally to make triumphant the Christian idea, the very important idea that the Kingdom of the Christian is not of this world.

In view of this, the unification of such varied elements as make up the Iberian peninsula does not seem strange nor surprising. The deep instinct of individuality which characterizes the Iberian race would have resisted all unification if it had not been for this religious idea, the deepest, the most essential, in the constitution of the Spanish race. As St. Hilaire says, nothing is more varied than the different parts of the Peninsula; products, climate, tastes, aptitudes, characteristics, divergent to a high degree: diverse opinions, striking contrasts. Nothing seems worse to the grave and indolent Castilian than the loquacious and swaggering Andalusian. The industrious Catalan goes to seek his fortune in all corners of the world; the Valen-

cian, sedentary and distrustful, prefers to cultivate in his rich garden spot the same patch in which his fathers plowed. The sturdy son of Galicia hires his robust shoulders to whoever will pay for them, from one end of Spain to the other. Next to the calm and noble Aragonese moves the lively Basque, one proud of his judiciary powers, the other of his municipal liberties.

7

Religion The Unifying Element

WHAT FORCE THEN WAS ABLE TO COMBINE AND harmonize such diverse elements and produce Spanish unity of purpose? Menendez y Pelayo, in his *History of Spanish Heterodoxy* (VII, 511), answers this question for us:

“Spain was not destined to be a great nation by the physiography of the land, by race, nor by the character of its people. Before the Roman

legions we succumbed, tribe by tribe, city by city, man by man. Each individual fought heroically to defend his own little group, but the ruins of his neighbor's village he viewed with complete impassibility, perhaps sometimes with joy. But with such diversity of climate, terrain, customs and religious rites how could there exist a deep consciousness of unity, of common origin, in fine, the feeling of nationality?

"The Spanish character, with the exception of some native traits of selvatic and ferocious independence, does not begin to manifest itself until the Roman domination. Rome, without completely obliterating our customs and traditions, led us to legislative unity. She tied one end of the peninsula to the other with a network of military roads and within that mesh created municipalities. She reorganized property and family relations upon a foundation so robust that it still exists fundamentally. With Rome we achieve unity of language. Our blood is mixed with that of our conquerors whose gods intermingle freely with ours. On the lips of our orators and poets Rome put the eloquence of Cicero and the sweet hexameters of Virgil.

Spain owes to Rome her elemental unity in language, art and law.

“But a more profound unity was lacking, the unity of faith. Only through the unity of religion does a people acquire a consciousness of itself, of its unanimous strength. In this unity institutions find their roots. It makes them genuine. It is the force of a common religion that sends the sap of life running through the outermost branches of the tree. Without the same God, the same altar and the same sacrifices what nation can consider itself strong? If men do not feel as brothers, sons of the same heavenly Father, regenerated by the same Redeemer, how can they dare to throw themselves with the faith and hope of youth into the torrent of the centuries? Without a deep trust in the protection of the Almighty over himself, his children, home and native land, without a sincere faith in that heaven which has abundantly watered his land, blessed the juridical bonds with his brothers, consecrated with the oil of justice the power he delegates for the well-being of the community and girded with the cincture of fortitude the warrior who fights the en-

emy of his faith or the foreign invader, can a man feel the strongly binding ties of a true fatherland?

“This unity was the gift of Christianity. The Church nurtured us at her breasts with her martyrs, confessors and fathers. Our first letters were the admirable laws of the Councils. Because of her we were born a nation, and a great nation, instead of a multitude of collectivities born to fall prey to the covetous eye of a foreign power.

“Our unity was not molded by the iron of the conquest, nor by the wisdom of our legislators. It was wrought by the apostles, Paul and James; watered by the blood of the deacon Laurentius, of the legion of martyrs of the arena of Tarra-gona and Zaragoza and by the virgins, Eulalia and Engratia. It was written in the code of the fathers of the Council of Iliberis, and shone in the Councils of Nicea and Sardis in the eloquence of Osius, and in Rome in the sanctity of Damasus. Prudentius sang it in verses of well tempered steel. Manicheism, agnosticism, barbarian Arianism and African Donatism fell before it. It civilized the Swabians and made of

the Visigoths the first Occidental nation. In the *Etymologies* of St. Isidore it wrote the first encyclopedia. It turned the *atria* of our temples into schools and upon the debris of the old doctrines it built a palace of scholastic science at the hands of Licinianus, Tajon and St. Isidore.

"It was this religious unity which in the code of laws known as the *Fuero Juzgo* blotted out the iniquitous laws of racial discrimination and called together *all* the people to deliberate in the legislative assemblies. To the Spanish patriots of the North, to the martyrs of the South, to St. Eulogius, Alvaro of Cordoba, Pelayo and Omar-ben-Hafsun it gave eternal and holy fortitude. It sent Teodulfus, Claudius and Prudentius to the France of Charlemagne to foster learning, and sheltered under the episcopal mantle of Archbishop Raymond and under the crown of Alfonsus VII, Semitic-Spanish science in the translators of Toledo.

"But is it necessary to raise our weak voices to attest all the benefits with which Christianity has so generously blessed our social life? There are other voices which speak to us from the

mountains and stones of Spain in the silent eloquence of church or sanctuary.

"If we felt any common purpose during the Middle Ages it was due to our Christianity, our faith, the only thing that has united us amid regional quarrels and civil dissension. The feeling of nationality is modern. Properly speaking, there exists no such idea until the Renaissance, but in the Middle Ages we did have one faith and one baptism, one flock and one shepherd, one church and one liturgy with an endless crusade and legion of saints who did combat for us from the Cantabrian Sea to Gibraltar, from the Pyrenees to the Atlantic.

"God granted us victory in war and rewarded our persevering efforts by giving us the highest destiny in the annals of human history: that of discovering another hemisphere, that of breaking the columns of Hercules.

"Once Spain had achieved this religious unity she carried it to her newly discovered possessions. Herein lies our greatness. We have no other."

With the taking of Granada and the close of the War of the Reconquest, the spirit of unifi-

cation was intensified in a most decisive manner. The Spanish people were now animated with the desire to make Christianity triumphant in all Europe. Columbus carried the Cross as his insignia to be planted on the American shore. John of Austria carried the Cross that Pope Pius V had given him to overcome the Turks and thus gain dominion for Christianity. Charles V exerted himself to the utmost to have the Council of Trent convene to reform the ecclesiastical customs. Philip II may be said to have ruined himself, not to realize a dream of world power as it is commonly affirmed, but to establish the triumph of Catholicism. For this he sacrificed himself and his nation. All Europe allied itself against this ideal and the result was not hard to predict. When the Spanish army began to witness defeat, religion and mysticism saved Spain from falling into vulgar commercialism.

At this very moment Spanish theologians reached the most profound heights in discussing religious problems. With supreme mastery they dealt with the moot questions of divine science: of predestination and of free will,

which touch the very roots of Christianity; of the nature and life of men; of the essence of God in His relations with His creatures. That titanic struggle, which, viewed superficially, may seem to some a question of no importance, is the clearest proof that the great question that preoccupied the Spaniard was the religious problem, and this over any other economic or political problem whatsoever.

8

Spain in America

AFTER THE GREAT STRUGGLE IN EUROPE TO maintain the unity of faith, a struggle in which Spain almost bled to death, the New World was opened to her by the providence of God. With that same high Christian ideal which had led Spain for centuries she spread the gospel of Christ throughout the continent. Scarcely had America been discovered but she was regener-

ated in Christ. The true purpose of the conquest is indicated in a clause in the testament of Queen Isabella: "Our principal intention in colonizing the New World is to attract and lead the natives of these dominions to our holy Catholic faith and to indoctrinate them and teach them good habits."

One of the first laws for the New World read: "Exhortation to maintain the Catholic faith and how it should be preached to the natives of the New World." In 1526 Charles V decreed that "the first thing a captain of the King should do on setting foot on the shore of a newly discovered province is to proclaim the holy faith to the Indians." Philip II, in 1573, promulgated the following law: "All possible means should be used in teaching the Indian the faith. Great care must be taken in their indoctrination and they should be harmed in no way. All we wish for them is their welfare and conversion."

Nevertheless, most of the popular histories—and sometimes those with scholarly pretensions—keep declaring that the conquerors, and the Spaniards in general, were *only* seeking gold.

Bernal Diaz del Castillo, the most reliable historian of the conquest, affirms: "We have suffered many cruel trials to serve God and His majesty and to bring light to those who labor in darkness and also to acquire riches which all men seek." Certainly they were searching for riches, but they never forgot the most important thing, the salvation of the natives, because they were Christians with a militant faith. "It is queer," the Peruvian historian, Riva Agüero, says, "that those who have spread more calumnies against the conquerors accusing them of cruelty and an insatiable thirst for gold are the writers of the so-called Anglo Saxon race, the sons of those races in which the lust for gold is most vehement and insatiable."

The Spanish conquerors mortgaged their hope from the very beginning on signing a contract with the crown, because they personally had to finance the voyage and run the risk of failure. If they made any profits as a result of their endeavors, these were to be divided equally with the crown. The crown could never lose, but failure meant the financial ruin of many stouthearted conquerors.

Hernan Cortes and his followers came to Mexico to amass a fortune but Cortes hazarded every penny in his treasury when, at great risk, he began his crusade to widen the dominions of the crown of Castille and Christianity in his search for Cibola and Quivira by land, Cathay and the Spice Islands by sea. These unfortunate ventures steeped him in debt.

Hernando de Soto, resident of San Leon in Nicaragua, was a rich man, but his adventuresome spirit lead him to place his personal fortune in arms, horses, boats and soldiers, at the disposition of Pizarro who was planning the conquest of Peru. A few years later he himself led an expedition to Florida at his own expense. Here that exemplary man, who had renounced the easy life of the rich, splashed through swamps and cut paths through thick forests, met constant attack from the Indians, marched hungry and ragged, with incessant heroism, to his death,

The same may be said of Cabeza de Vaca, Ojeda, Balboa, of the aged Pedrarias (who, at eighty, was still founding cities in the forests of Nicaragua), and of Melendez de Aviles, who

made the most heroic vow of all: "And thus I have offered to His majesty, our Lord, God, that everything that in this world I may obtain will be dedicated to the spreading of the gospel in this land to enlighten the natives, who dwell in darkness, with the rays of divine faith."

Bernal Diaz del Castillo lists many conquerors who, having succeeded in their conquests, renounced all and girded themselves with the sackcloth of the penitent friar to preach the gospel to the natives. Even Pizarro, the most vilified of the conquerors, struggled heroically to construct a kingdom in which the basic law was the Christian religion, as Porras Barrenechea has shown in his biography.

There is no place here to deny that the conquerors were searching for gold; however, it is a historical truth that these men shared their treasures generously, founding churches, convents, schools and universities which are standing today. Just fifty years after its discovery, according to Solorzano Pereyra, the New World had 360 monasteries, four archbishoprics and a considerable number of bishoprics. As Maeztu affirms, the whole of Spain was a mis-

sionary nation in the sixteenth century, the kings as well as the soldiers, prelates and friars. By the seventeenth century, there were six archbishops, thirty-two bishops, 200 ecclesiastical dignitaries, 300 canons and some 70,000 churches.

Waldo Frank observes that since the tribes of Israel crossed the river Jordan to land in Palestine never has the world seen the conquest of a country so impregnated with religious and mystic fervor. This spirit, which has always characterized the Spanish soul, was the result of a long, painful Christian mystic novitiate suffered during the struggle with the Arabs. For eight centuries the history of Spain is the history of the reconquest of the soil of the peninsula for God and Christian civilization. When the Spaniards arrived in the New World, they already had much experience in dealing with diverse races, with the problem of land distribution and with social problems. In the sixteenth century no European people were so well endowed to colonize the new continent, precisely because of the peculiar conditions developed during the struggle with the Arabs. It

is well to remember that for these eight centuries the history of the Castilian monarchs is reducible to one tremendous plan for conquest: the foundation of new cities, the reorganization of provinces taken from Islam and the expansion of the Church through the new dominions. It was, in a word, the transplantation of a race, a language and a civilization. Thus, in the conquest of America, it did not have to improvise, because the Castilian people were rich in experience in such matters.

Carlos Castillo, in his introduction to the *Anthology of Mexican Literature*, observes: "Spain gave to her colonies in the New World her language, religion, civic institutions, her system of education, her social customs, her chivalric sense of honor and her mystic fervor. Spain gave her body and soul to the New World."

The spirit that inspired and vivified the laws of the Spanish kings and the conduct of the viceroys is the same that sustained the crusade against the Moors and sent Columbus forth to the discovery of a new continent: the propagation of the Christian faith. To understand the

Spanish colonization of America, this is the essential point of departure. If we do not keep this idea constantly in our minds, we run the risk of interpreting very badly the colossal work realized in the New World by Spain.

9

The Renaissance in Spain

DURING THE RENAISSANCE THE SPIRIT OF Christianity suffered an attack from two forces which tried to corrupt it: Hellenism and Rationalism. The Hellenic spirit attacked Christian spirituality, exalting matter over spirit, the enjoyments of the flesh over purity of the soul, injecting, moreover, the Platonic idea of an abstract and impersonal God. But this idea had

already been anathematized by St. Paul and the Church Fathers who proved the supreme value of the spirit, which is immortal and which never ought to let itself be dominated by the passions of the body. The rationalistic tendency wished man to return to ancient individualism, which makes the human being a kind of egocentrism, that is to say, man may form his own individual religion without participating in any way in group religion, each one founding for himself and by himself his own church, a principle that has led to religious anarchy.

The Spanish soul, profoundly Catholic, resisted these tendencies, declaring itself sincerely obedient to the Church and spiritualizing the art of the Renaissance which threatened a return to crude paganism. Again, Spanish mysticism was not dissolved in the pure abstractions of the Hellenism of the Areopagite, as was German mysticism in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; nor did it become individualistic by separating itself from the communion of the faithful and of the Church.

Spanish mysticism is above all an obedient

child of the Church, subjecting all its acts to the decision of authority. If it labors to unite itself with God, it is by means of good works and by conquering the world and the passions of the flesh. Spanish mysticism neither loses itself in vague abstractions, nor does it live in isolation. Contemplation, the necessary medium for the union with God, is always mixed with much activity, and one of its most notable characteristics is that of self-sacrifice for one's neighbor. This is the true spirit of Christianity, the true spirit of the Gospel. It bloomed pure in Spain because it was not vitiated by the conciliation of Christianity and pagan philosophy.

Following the doctrines of the Brahmins, Buddhists, Neoplatonists, Gnostics and Illuminati, many Quietists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries wished that the *whole perfection* of man be reduced to absorption in the Divine Essence, annihilating individuality and private conscience in the absolute Being, or rather in Nirvana. For this reason their metaphysics was reduced to pantheism; their morality, to contempt for personal activity and the worthlessness of deeds. The height of their am-

bition was to see God by means of immediate intuition. The logical consequence of these doctrines was soon manifest in practical deeds. This absorption in God results in man's becoming part of divinity. When he reaches this state, it is clear that, forming a part of God, he becomes essentially pure. Since "to the pure all things are pure" and holy, he is no longer responsible for whatever he may do. To express it more clearly, it is not necessary to practice good works, because every act produced by the man who already forms a part of God is necessarily good. The natural result of this theory was that the greater part of these Illuminati gave themselves over to the lowest forms of immorality.

Spanish mysticism never fell into such excesses. It never allowed the sacraments to be forgotten, nor acts of charity, good works, nor love of one's neighbor. For in this love of one's fellow creature it saw a sure sign of the love of God. In spite of that scorn of matter, which not only all mysticism but also all Christian doctrine professes, it condemned with equal energy that complete abandon of the body by

which all disorders are so easily excused. It is enough to recall the words of Fray Luis de Granada: "There are two classes of virtues, the interior and the exterior, for man is neither all soul nor all body, but body and soul together." Thus, Christianity is not the interior alone, nor solely the exterior, but the one and the other united. For this reason, he who does not wish to be deceived, but desires to be a true and perfect Christian, must not separate that which is of the body from that which pertains to the spirit. This is very far from the doctrine of the impeccability of the mystic which the Illuminati support. When Spanish mystics speak of *annihilation* of the ego, they do it with reservation. They feel the need of making an explanation: the soul does not annihilate itself, it does not destroy its own self; it annihilates in itself only that which could divert it from its purpose. St. Teresa is even more explicit about this important point, saying: "Charity is the source of action. And although the mystic state seems rather a contemplative life than an active one, when love is well directed Martha and Mary never cease to work together, con-

templation and activity. . . The Lord desires good works. If you see a sick person to whom you can give help, let nothing importune you to lose that act of devotion, and in addition sympathize with the sick one, and if she has grief, suffer it with her, and if necessary, fast that she may eat, not so much for her sake but because you know that the Lord wishes it so." And later, in her *Moradas*, she counsels her nuns: "Leave your prayers for an act of charity and alms giving, and if it is necessary to fast in order to feed those who are hungry, fast with joy and happiness."

That other great mystic, St. John of the Cross, spent his younger days taking care of the sick. St. Diego, a Franciscan mystic, deprived himself of necessary food to feed the poor. St. Thomas of Villanova, Archbishop of Valencia, was called "the almsgiver" by his contemporaries. St. John of God, disciple of John of Avila, founded an order of charity. Fray Luis de Granada recommends, time and time again, helping the needy, serving the sick and visiting hospitals. In fact, all the mystics recommended and practiced works of charity. "Spanish mys-

ticism," comments Ticknor, "possesses the virtue that the whole world in the sixteenth century lacks, Luther as well as the Duke of Alba, Leo X as well as Calvin; *mercy* or *compassion*. It is the one thing that stands out conspicuously over the bloody and gloomy background of the most cruel century of modern times."

Menendez y Pelayo exclaims: "And this is Spanish mysticism, not sickly or selfish or inert, but virile, energetic and robust, even in the pens of women. No one has described as well as St. Teresa the union of God with the center of the soul; nor has explained it with such pleasing comparisons as that of the two wax candles that join their light or that of the rain which comes to fill up the bed of a stream. But this union does not bring with it annihilation or Nirvana. The soul recognizes and maintains its own personality. . . .

"For Spain the happy age, and the most glorious century, was that in which religious enthusiasm and the almost divine inspiration of the poets was joined with the exquisite purity of the form that came hither on the wings of Grecian and Italian breezes, that century, in which Cas-

tilian mysticism, hitherto silent or indistinct, having broken the bars of the prison in which the assiduous reading of Tauler and Ruysbroeck had incarcerated it, gave glorious proof of itself, free and immune from all taint of Quietism and Pantheism, and ran like an overflowing current through the field of language and art. Its most illustrious representatives are Avila, the apostle of Andalusia; the ascetic and severe Peter of Alcantara; the gentle John of the Angels; Luis de Granada of Ciceronian eloquence; Malon de Chaide with his oriental imagination; Luis de Leon, a serene and pure mind who revealed, in his *Names of Christ*, Christianized Platonic philosophy; and St. Teresa of Jesus who explained the lofty doctrine of personal knowledge and of the union with God, with images and comparisons of the most sublime metaphysics."

Spanish mysticism is very different from the mysticism of the decadent systematic philosophies. It is not esoteric and mysterious, but rather aspires to influence the moral education of the people and to satisfy their religious fervor. That is why the language of the common

people is used in the works of the mystical writers. The great mystic writers, St. John of the Cross, Fray Luis de Leon and Fray Luis de Granada, are the real fathers of modern Spanish. Fray Luis de Leon says: "The only Spanish I know is that which my nurses taught me, the everyday language of the people." For this reason the mystics were very popular; they did not have recourse to vague and ponderous abstractions to describe the mystical experience, but resorted to the vivid imagery of the marketplace.

Another characteristic of this Spanish mysticism is the delicacy and subtlety of its psychoanalysis, in which the Spaniards certainly have advanced further than the mystics of the North. This may be due to racial tendencies and conditions of a national character that can be clearly seen in the history of Spanish culture. Let no one be astonished that introspection is the most solid foundation of St. Teresa's *Moradas*. Spanish philosophy of the sixteenth century, the true and independent philosophy, is characterized by a marked psychological tendency: from the time when Luis Vives in his treatise on *An-*

ima et Vita, anticipating the Cartesian and Scottish schools, defended the method of the silent experience with the inner self, the "tacita cognitio. . . experientia cujuslibet intra se ipsum," to the time when Gomez Pereira destroyed the *species intelligibilis* and the hypothesis of representation in the process of knowledge and raised over its ruin the edifice which Hamilton calls "natural realism."

Differing from other more or less sickly and selfish forms of mysticism, Spanish mysticism gains warmth from the hearth of charity and proclaims the efficacy and the value of good works. St. Teresa would never exclaim, as did Victoria Colonna, the pupil of Juan de Valdes:

*Cieco e'l nostro voler, vane son l'opre
Cadono al primo vol le mortal piume.*

Quite to the contrary, the Spanish saint repeats again and again, "Works, works are the most eloquent testimony of mystic love."

Spain has stubbornly resisted the secularist and anti-Christian tendencies of modern civilization. Thousands of examples attest this fact

that all through her history Spain struggled against the inroads of such philosophy and culture that might destroy her Christian and mystic qualities. Fear of the loss of her Christianity, the loss of her soul, was Spain's greatest pre-occupation, and this shaped her history from the very beginning to the present day.

The Renaissance in Spain affected no fundamental change in life and customs as it did in other countries. We might almost call it "bookish" for, although Greek and Latin were avidly studied and some new ideas spread throughout the nation, the ideals of the Middle Ages were still very much alive in the Spanish soul. It is enough to look at the Spanish theatre of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the plays of Lope de Vega, Calderon and Tirso de Molina, to see the Middle Ages in the *point of honor*, a medieval conception of gallantry, in the passion for adventure and the cult of bravery, and in the idealization of woman and chivalrous individualism. This spirit continues to thrive in the lyrics also. Even *Don Quijote*, which has been interpreted by some as a caricature of the Middle Ages, is basically a melan-

choly and sad farewell to a world fast disappearing.

In the literary and artistic creation of Spain there was, of course, more than morality and sanctity. Side by side with Sts. Theresa, Ignatius Loyola and John of the Cross there walk Celestina, the incarnation of satanic wickedness, and the rogues, Lazarillo and the Buscon. Alongside the austere Escorial stands the "cloister" of Monipodio, where the art of roguery was taught as systematically as theology at Salamanca. In *Don Quijote* we find an assortment of questionable characters: Maritornes, the galley slaves, Gines de Pasamonte, captain of the petty thieves, and Roque Guinart, a Spanish Robin Hood. However, they are only incidental characters who give color to the work and do not interfere with its informing principle.

Spain saw the advantages of studying the classical writers of antiquity, but she was horrified by the exaggerated and pagan worship of these authors. This, she could never accept. As Aubrey Bell observes in his *Louis de Leon* (p.41):

"The sixteenth century in Spain when Spain stood at the head of the nations of Europe, is all the more interesting to study because it bears a strong resemblance to our own age. If we substitute heresy for Bolshevism, and Luther for Lenin, and the discovery of America for the development in flying, we shall obtain a good insight into the various influences at work in men's minds.

"If we inquire into the special characteristics of the Spanish Renaissance, we find, foremost, a sanity, moderation and balance scarcely to be found elsewhere in the sixteenth century, certainly not in France or Italy.

"It could not be said of the Spanish scholars, as Ascham said of those of Italy, that 'they have in more reverence the Triumphes of Petrarche than the Genesis of Mose, they make more account of Tullie's *Offices* than St. Paul's *Epistles*, of a Tale of Bocace than a storie of the Bible'."

When the degradation of human dignity and the relaxation of customs began to reach a lamentable state, Spain immediately began to oppose these tendencies with all her might.

In his will, Charles V, who had so often been feign to trim and temporize, charged his son Philip II to be uncompromising in rooting out heresy in Spain and her dominions. In this titanic struggle against the Reformation and the pagan tendencies of the Renaissance, Spain exhausted herself. Even though she lost the battle for others, there still remains in the peninsula an enormous reserve of moral strength. This, too, she transmitted to her colonies.

10

Opposition to Secularism

THE RENAISSANCE IS REplete WITH PROOFS of the triumph of this Spanish idea over the pagan. It can be seen most clearly in the effects of the defeat of sound reason in the rest of Europe, especially in the eighteenth century France of the *enlightenment*..

The *enlightenment*, the so-called emancipation of the mind of man, had its root in the

Renaissance, in that anthropocentric conception of humanism, with its naturalistic currents; while Spain defended with all her strength the *theocentric* or Christian concept of humanism. The anthropocentric humanism which began in the Renaissance reached a climax in eighteenth century France in its intellectual individualism, its rationalism, its skepticism, its materialism, its antitraditionalism, its license and its humanitarianism which completely lacked Christian charity.

The new philosophy of enlightenment was characterized by an opposition to all authority: religion, political and traditional. The ideals of this philosophy were to be found in a natural religion, a natural law, a natural state: the force of human reason unhampered by external bonds. It believed in a "dogma of human perfectibility," the progress of humanity which would be elaborated into a perfection to be reached in some near and earthly future.

All these ideas seeped into Spain and they were accepted by many. But a tremendous reaction took place and one of the most outspoken spirits, Forner, directed the strongest

resistance against the philosophy of the Encyclopedists. Forner, who represented the old Spanish tradition, had no sympathy for the spirit of his times. He alludes to the misfortune of being born in an age which hardly recognizes rectitude in its manner of thinking and judging, yet gives itself the magnificent title of philosophic. He calls it rather an age of oracles, an age of *ultramontane Sophists* who, by their boldness and vain verbosity, have influenced and won over the common writers to a capricious manner of speaking.

In censoring the attempts of the Encyclopedists to rationalize everything and their repudiation of Revelation because they were unable to penetrate the supernatural, Forner, interpreting the traditional Spanish sentiments, categorically affirms that, no matter what science or religion may investigate, it will never bring about a restoration in society without taking into consideration the origin of the universe, the nature of man and his works and, above all, God and His designs in regard to man and the world. He points with pride to the fact that Spain has always esteemed reli-

gion above all things, however much she has been considered a barbarous, uncultured and unprogressive nation; adding that in Spain writers have spent more time, more attention and more paper in writing about God and His Providence and about the inner soul of man than on any other subject.

Contrary to the ideas of the philosophies which work for the destruction of revealed religion, Forner considered religion as most essential to man and as natural to him as thinking. To him, man without religion is nothing more than a wild man who inhabits the forest. Religion and morals are the sciences that protect man and preserve his dignity and integrity as a rational being. Consequently, religion to his mind is not only the most important study for man, but his most urgent obligation. And here we have the second instance after the Renaissance where Spain opposed the dreams about human happiness on this earth proclaimed by the Encyclopedists.

In the long and bitter struggle between the conservatives and liberals during the nineteenth century we witness the same phenomenon:

Spain's fear of losing her soul due to the incursion of secularism. From 1812, when the Spanish constitution of Cadiz was proclaimed, to the present day the tremendous effort of the majority of Spaniards was primarily this defence of themselves against the attack of the so-called liberals who wished to bring about, at all costs, the Europeanization of the peninsula. Here is their fundamental misunderstanding of the Spanish spirit. It is the same difficulty that the average European, and the North American even more, stumbles upon when he tries to fathom the Spanish "puzzle". Spain is in Europe undoubtedly, but it does not have the same characteristics of other European peoples. Spain is Spain, and one has to take it as it is and not as one would make it.

These considerations ought to aid us in the understanding of the Spanish tragedy. The history of Spain is a long tragedy. There is no other European nation where Catholicism has been absorbed so deeply into the national soul, to the point of forming the true national spirit. And, since Catholicism is a tragedy for anyone who would embrace it with all its principles

and consequences, as the life and passion of Christ was a tragedy, here we have an explanation of the puzzle of Spain. St. Paul said that, considered from an earthly viewpoint, the Christians of this world are the most miserable of men, for the kingdom of Christ is not of this world. The true Christian has to sacrifice and give up all worldly ambition, all the triumphs and glories of the flesh; in fact, he has to crush within himself the "old man" and create a new spirit whose purpose in life is the conquest of the kingdom of God. This conquest has been accomplished by many souls individually throughout the world, but the history of Christianity only records one case where an entire nation has thrown itself, with all its resources and spirit, into the attainment of this idea on a national scale.

For example, if Spain had not followed Catholic theology in colonizing Spanish America, there would not be a single Indian there today. It would be populated only by the white race; it would be today simply a prolongation of the peninsula. But Spain, in spite of the cruelty of certain conquerors, always considered

as her fundamental duty the salvation of the soul of the Indian, the creation of a people by fusing herself with the native in a spirit of true Christian love and democracy. This policy caused the complete ruin of Spain in the material order, because it created a *mestizo* class which became the greatest champion of independence from Spain; but she left there her national Catholic spirit which will last until the end of the centuries.

11

The Lietmotif of Spanish Literature

THE MYSTICAL SPIRIT OF SPAIN RUNS through her literature. No matter how gayly or how attractively Spanish literary masterpieces paint the pleasure of this life, there is always a pause for this leitmotif: "seeing that the days of man are short; that the things of this world are empty and deceitful; that all die and perish like water poured on the ground," the

funeral dirge constantly echoing over the barren plains of Castile.

The Archpriest of Hita, author of the *Book of Good Love*, the human comedy of the Middle Ages, interrupts his narration of the pleasures of love to warn us that tomorrow might be too late to amend for our sins:

How quickly health and precious life are in the
void interred,
And vanish in a moment's time, almost ere men
have stirred;
Tomorrow's good intention is but a meaningless,
naked word,
Go, dress it today with good works before Death's
voice is heard.

And the *Celestina*, second only to *Don Quijote* in Spanish literature, sounds the same mournful note:

O world, world! I thought in my tender years
that you were governed by order and ruled by
reason: but now I see how fickle are your goods;
there is no certainty in your calms. Now you
seem a labyrinth of errors; a fearful wilderness;
a habitation of wild beasts; a dance full of

changes; a fen full of mire and dirt; a country full of stones; a meadow full of snakes and serpents; a garden, pleasant to look at, but without fruit; a fountain of cares, a river of tears, a sea of miseries; trouble without profit; a sweet poison, a vain hope, a false joy, and a true sorrow. O false world! Before us you cast the bait of sweet delights and when we have swallowed them we feel the hook that must choke us.

The anonymous author of the famous *Letter to Fabio* counsels the young man to follow his example, for he has broken the chains that made him prisoner to the follies of this world:

Come, follow me and seek a better life,
Hasten, ere *time in our arms will die*.

The courtier and soldier, Jorge Manrique, expresses better than any poet the fleeting of time, her "treacherous smiles":

The pleasures and delights which mask
In treacherous smiles life's serious task,
What are they all,
But the fleet coursers of the chase,
And death an ambush in the race,
Wherein we fall?

To Segismundo, the hero of Calderon's greatest drama, *Life is a Dream*, life is "a mirage that falsely gleams":

The king dreams he is king, and he lives
In the deceit of a king,
Commanding and governing;
And all the praise he receives
Is written in the wind, and leaves
A little dust on the way
When death ends all with a breath.
Where then is the gain of the throne,
That shall perish and not be known
In the other dreams that is death?

.
What is life? 'Tis but a madness.
What is life? A thing that seems,
A mirage that falsely gleams,
Phantom joy, delusive rest,
Since life is a dream at best,
And even dreams themselves are dreams.

The satirist, Quevedo, sees in the political decadence of Spain a symbol of the ravages of time:

I saw the ramparts of my native land
One time so strong, now dropping in decay,

.

And there was nothing on which to set my eyes
That was not a reminder of the end.

Perhaps no one in literature was as convinced of his mission as Don Quijote. But even he, in the midst of his endeavors to restore the order of chivalry by which all the injustice in the world would vanish, compares himself with profound melancholy to the saints and knights who professed the exercise of arms: "They conquer heaven," he says, "by force of arms, and for heaven suffereth violence, while I so far know not what I conquer by force of my toils" (II, ch. 58).

12

Thirst for Immortality

AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE PHENOMENA WE have observed, that the true philosophy of Spain is her mystical spirit, we arrive at another fundamental characteristic of the Spaniard: his ambition for immortality—so marvelously felt and expressed by Unamuno—which forms the core of every genuinely Spanish soul. This desire for immortality is such that Unamuno

goes as far as to say that, if there were no idea of immortality, Spain would have created it. This pressing upon eternity determines all the philosophy, all the literary and artistic creation of Spain. This philosophy forces the Spaniard to bring his every act and thought into direct relation with God. Other peoples consider what bearing each act in life has on the preceding and the following in an effort to forge a logical chain, to integrate their life, to give it reason on a purely terrestrial, horizontal plane; in short, to weave a logical biography of cause and effect with no break. But the Spaniard, whose method lies in the most intimate recesses of his soul, knows that on this present moment depends eternity. He does not place one action in relation to the other in order to trace the logical temporal scheme of things along a horizontal line. His every thought and action must have a direct contact with God himself; it must travel upward on that vertical line which ties his soul to God.

Thus he sanctifies his life by sanctifying, one by one, each thought and deed. He wants to live each moment as if he were already united

to eternity itself. To God he consecrates each isolated instant of his life separately, precisely to be able to break this human sequence, this temporal succession of events, this terrestrial order of things. Thus, immediately, for him each moment must be filled with eternity. In this idea we find the origin of the baroque in Spain; because this fundamental idea is not comprehended in Europe there follow misinterpretations of baroque on all sides.

The artistic creation of the Spanish soul, its art and its literature, appear to others as fragments, as wild strokes of the brush, as pieces chipped by an axe with no apparent order, logic or unity. For the Spaniard unity consists in an inner unity, in that driving thirst for immortality, that inner force which tries to abolish the distance caused by space and time between the temporal and the Eternal Being.

The misunderstanding of this fundamental driving force of the Spaniard has also led to the misinterpretation of the Spanish *nada* (nothing) and *naderias* by many who take this word to mean *nihilism*, especially Russian nihilism. To the Spaniard *nada* is the utter futility of the

present moment if it is not related intimately with the eternal. This futility of the things of this earth is well expressed in Calderon's *Life is a Dream*, in El Greco's *Spanish Gentleman*, in the masterpieces of Zurbaran and Valdes Leal, especially in the superb lines of Jorge Manrique:

Beholding how each instant flies
So swift that, as we count, 'tis gone
Beyond recover,
Let us resolve to be more wise
Than stake our future lot upon
What soon is over.
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This world is but a highway going
Unto that other, the abode
Without sorrow;
The wise are they who gird them, knowing
The guideposts set along that road
Unto tomorrow.

The Spaniard knows that economic forces are important, but not all important. He knows that there is more to human history than was conceived by nineteenth century materialism. He also realizes how shallow was the optimism

that stemmed from the eighteenth century enlightenment. He believes we must recover what religion taught: that there are two ways of knowing—*exploration* of the horizontal, worldly plane, but, first and foremost, *contemplation* of the vertical or transcendental.

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